



# FRIENDS *of* PITTVILLE

September 2021

The aim of Friends of Pittville is to promote greater community involvement in the enjoyment, protection, future restoration and renewal of Pittville Park and Estate.

## COME AND JOIN US!

We have long prided ourselves on our large membership as a sign of support for our activities, but inevitably over the last months our numbers have dwindled. This newsletter is the first opportunity since early last year to make a direct appeal for new members. So why join us? In return for a modest fee, you will get **four newsletters** a year, but also the satisfaction of supporting the wellbeing of Pittville's green spaces and heritage. And perhaps, more importantly, you could become involved more actively, in many different ways.

A popular choice for active involvement is to join the twice-monthly **Green Space Volunteers** working parties in the park – see Chris Archibald's article, below. If you are interested in investigating local history, you can join the **Pittville History Works** research group. If you want to meet other members in a more casual setting, come to the **monthly drop-ins** at the Pump Room café. And a niche essential activity involves helping to keep the **wildfowl feeder** near the playground filled.

Perhaps you are interested in writing? If so, there are lots of opportunities for producing articles for this **newsletter** or the FoP **website**. They might be based on interviews with people involved in park activities and events; they could be reviews of events, comment or just information-giving.

And if you are technically minded, you could have a role in running the website, contributing to Facebook and other social media pages, and generally helping keep FoP up to date with digital support for its aims and objectives.

## FRIENDS OF PITTVILLE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday 26 October at 6pm  
At the Pittville Pump Room  
(by kind permission of  
The Cheltenham Trust)

You could organise **events** on behalf of FoP. There are the regular annual events, including drop-ins, quiz nights and plant sales, but you may want to



organise **performances**. Last summer, for example, FoP put on two very successful musical events on the bandstand in front of the Pump Room. These events might be aimed at a range of age groups.



Or you can be even more involved by joining our committee and making use of your personal skills and interests (ecology, heritage, organising, managing, writing, IT and working on projects with like-

minded people) and help shape the future of the park and preserve Pittville's heritage.

Interested? Fill in the enclosed membership form and contact any of the people listed at the end of this newsletter. *Judie Hodsdon and Andy Hopkins*

## Get involved in our projects!

By far the largest project we have been part of was the **restoration of Pittville Gates**. Following an unsuccessful bid by Cheltenham Borough Council for Heritage Lottery funding, FoP took on the Gates restoration, led the project board, worked closely with CBC, the architect and contractors to influence the design of the surroundings and ensure the restoration was fully completed, and

raised nearly £300,000. This was quite an undertaking for a small charity, but between us we already had the skills needed or were happy to try new things and learnt a lot. The stone pillars were replaced, the remaining ironwork refurbished, the missing elements replaced, the surroundings paved and the garden created. The project was completed to time by April 2014 and to budget, and we are delighted by their final appearance.



More recently, we were part of the CBC project to upgrade the **play area and aviaries**. We contributed to the design, but our major task was to raise some of the funding. Through grant applications, publicising the need for donations and crowdfunding we raised £100,000, a fifth of the total cost, which ensured the project could be fully completed.

This brings us to our current project, referred to as **the Masterplan**, which is a cover term for a series of improvements to the area around the upper lake and the Pump Room, on which we are working in partnership with the CBC Green Spaces team. The first undertaking has been the **rockery at the west end of the lake**. One of our trustees,



Chris Archibald, researched the history of the rockery and the final design is based on his findings. Most of the work was carried out by the Green Space Volunteers and has now been completed despite the delays caused by Covid.

The **eastern rockery** is still to be tackled, but meanwhile the plans for the **restoration of the set of steps** in front of the Pump Room and the **replacement of the ironwork** at the two gateways are ready to submit for planning permission and listed building consent. Another big fundraising effort faces us! *Judie Hodsdon*

## Goings-on at Pittville Gates

Several recent events have threatened the beautiful appearance of the Gates and their surroundings. First, Severn Trent replaced a hydrant cover and despite three attempts didn't manage to repair the damage to the surrounding paving design. Fortunately, Mike Beamish, who laid the paving originally, offered his services and has put it all back to rights beautifully. Severn Trent eventually agreed to pay the costs.

Then Netomnia, a fibre broadband company, installed an underground facility in the Gates garden. Despite taking care, there was damage to two Samaritan roses and some lavender. They willingly agreed to pay the costs of replacing them.

And then there are the e-scooters! An e-scooter parking place was marked out obstructing pedestrian access along Clarence Road, though in fact the scooters are abandoned randomly around the gateway. It appears the company do not have to seek any official permission to site an e-scooter parking area even if it gets in the way of pedestrians or impacts a listed structure. If you think this is not right and that Pittville Gates is not a suitable location, please get in touch with Stephan Fifield, Pittville's county councillor ([stephan.fifield@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:stephan.fifield@gloucestershire.gov.uk)), and complain. *Judie Hodsdon*

## Green Space Volunteers

During the Covid restrictions, people really have appreciated their public parks and open spaces. So many more people have used Pittville Park, with consequently more wear and tear. Under the circumstances it has been difficult for CBC to keep up with the maintenance. Fortunately more people have joined our Green Space Volunteers to help with the maintenance and make improvements to the park, but there are still more jobs to do than volunteers.

If you would like to get out into the fresh air and join a friendly group of volunteers then please come along and join us litter picking, weeding, pruning and improving paths. We also take on



projects such as restoring the rockery next to the upper lake and recreating the bed next to Evesham Road and Wellington Road. We meet at 9am for two hours on the first and third Thursday of each month. Contact me at the email address below for more details.

Chris Archibald

## Progress on the bandstand



The new shingle roof is finished and looks great, and by the time you read this, we expect the scaffolding to be down to reveal our refurbished bandstand. Perhaps we can look forward to seeing some live music there before the autumn comes – though the bandstand is far more likely to come into its own next summer.

## Walks and talks in Pittville this month

**Opening of Pittville Spa.**

**THE NOBILITY, GENTRY, and the PUBLIC**  
are most respectfully informed, that

**These Magnificent Rooms,**  
*With the extensive & beautiful Walks, Rides & Drives,*  
**Will be Opened**  
**To-Morrow, Tuesday, July 20th,**  
WITH  
**A Public Breakfast.**

↳ The Pump Room will be appropriated for *DANCING*,—effective *BANDS* will be in attendance,—and every possible arrangement made to promote the general accommodation of the Assembly.

•• Mr. MARSHALL, the MASTER of the CEREMONIES, has very kindly consented to officiate on the occasion.

†† Admission Tickets, 7s. 6d. each, may be procured at the Pump Room, and at the Libraries. [2963]

Do you want to know about ‘the Season’, if anyone lived in Pittville Pump Room, what a ‘public breakfast’ is, what the chemical composition is of the mineral water that used to flow in the Pump

Room? Would you like to taste a ‘treat’ of the period? Come to the talks being held by Pittville Pump Room Revival and Pittville History Works near the edge of the lake during Heritage Open Days, on Saturday 18 September at either 10am or 2pm. For further information and tickets, please go to

[www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/these-magnificent-rooms-the-season-at-pittville-spa](http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/these-magnificent-rooms-the-season-at-pittville-spa)

If you want to wander through the park and learn more about the trees and other plants, wildlife and a little history, join Friends of Pittville’s Rob Hyatt-Williams, on Friday 10 and Sunday 19 September at 10.30am. Booking is needed. Details are at [www.chelcivicsoc.org](http://www.chelcivicsoc.org)

In St Paul’s you can also visit the hidden-away Francis Close Hall Edible Garden on Sunday 12 and Sunday 19 September between 11am and 1pm. No booking is required. Look out for signs as it is really hidden away!

Fiona Clarke

## Holst Victorian House transformation

The Holst Birthplace Museum (4 Clarence Road) is undergoing an exciting transformation into the Holst Victorian House (HVH). HVH is the only Victorian home in Cheltenham open to the public. The aim is to broaden the appeal to visitors,



immersing them in the experience of stepping back in time and being among the residents of a Victorian home, all whilst retaining the attraction for those interested in Holst and his music. We hope very much to welcome (back) Friends of Pittville members. Phase 1 – launched to coincide with Heritage Open Days (10-19 September) – will see new interpretative material, a redesigned website, a changed visitor pathway through the house and Victorian-themed events (talks, cooking demos, Punch & Judy shows).

# FRIENDS OF PITTVILLE PLANT SALE

Saturday 2 October 2021

10.00am -12.00

Central Cross Drive  
(in front of the Scout Hut)

Winter bedding plants from local nurseries  
and bulbs and plants from Cheltenham  
Horticultural Society and FoP members.

To raise funds to help Friends of Pittville make  
improvements in the park.

There will be a new film telling the story of the house in ten objects and another setting the house in context. The museum is currently open on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays for pre-booked appointments, and walk-in visitors will be admitted providing that the museum is not overcrowded. We plan to open five days a week (Tuesdays to Saturdays) from 10 September. To keep in touch with developments, events etc. follow us on Twitter, Facebook or the website. *Martin Renshaw (on behalf of the Trustees of the Holst Birthplace Trust)*

## Pittville badgers



As some of you may know, we have an active badger sett in Pittville Park. The original sett was in the wild garden of the school. Then they created a satellite sett, which is normal practice for badgers when having cubs, but, unusually, they have stayed there. So there are now two active holes.

Badgers have been a protected species since 1992. They are wild animals, and often live in the same areas as foxes, coming out at dusk, and disliking noise or disturbance. One of the greatest dangers to the badgers in the park, particularly if there are cubs in the sett, is from dogs who venture into the

holes. Despite there being notices up to keep dogs on a lead, some people choose to ignore them, and others think nothing of persecuting badgers by filling in their holes.

The badgers excavate the area quite deeply to create the sett, and sometimes unearth interesting old artefacts, but they can leave the area looking a bit like a building site, and it has been known for this to be reported, and the sett filled in – a tragedy for the family of badgers.

The Gloucestershire Badger Trust has been working with our park rangers, and recommends that we make an exclusive wildlife zone, perhaps cordoning off the area to make a wildlife corridor, whilst still allowing access for litter picking and any other necessary maintenance activities. This would give the badgers better cover and allow them to continue to raise their cubs safely.

There has been an increase in urban badgers, as with foxes, and if you would like to help in the preservation of these wonderful wild animals, or attend a training session to find out more about what can be done to protect them, contact Cheryl Dyke at the Gloucestershire Badger Trust: [cheryl\\_dyke@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:cheryl_dyke@hotmail.co.uk) Sally Thomas

## New committee members needed

We are looking for a couple of new committee members to help with organising and helping out at events and particularly someone with IT and website management skills. What about joining up with a friend or partner? You do not necessarily need to become a trustee to be an active committee member. Please contact the secretary at the email address below for more details.

### Editor

Andy Hopkins

### Photos

Richard McCleery  
Cheltenham Camera Club  
Henry Williams  
Andy Hopkins

### Contact FoP at

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Facebook Friends of Pittville

**Registered charity number** 1146790



The MBE for volunteer groups

